

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

NATURE IN ART: A CELEBRATION OF 300 YEARS OF WILDLIFE PAINTING. By David Trapnell. David & Charles, Newton Abbot and London. 1991: 160 pp., 110 color plates (some with preliminary sketches), 8 black-and-white plates. £35.00.—Among the numerous illustrated books on the history of wildlife art in general or bird art in particular, this contribution has a number of unique qualities. In spite of its title, it is not a survey of the history of wildlife paintings of the past three centuries. It is based *entirely* on the works owned by or loaned to the International Centre for Wildlife Art (ICWA) near Gloucester, England. This means that many of the outstanding figures among wildlife artists are not mentioned at all, much less their works reproduced. It also means that for some of the artists that *are* included, the reproduced pieces do not represent their best or most typical work. This is carried to an extreme in the case of Mark Catesby, whose career is briefly but adequately summarized. But the ICWA owns no Catesby original, so the Catesby account is illustrated by a reproduction of a *copy*, admittedly quite faithful, by a German named Johann Mark Seligmann (1720–1762), whose work published between 1749 and 1776 also included copies taken from George Edwards. Among the historical bird artists not mentioned are Abbot, Barra-band, Cassin, Elliot, Grayson, Gronvold, Knip, Smit, and Swainson. Many later excellent British bird painters are missing, but twentieth century American and Canadian artists are particularly conspicuous by their absence, most notably Fuertes, but also Brooks, Horsfall, Sutton, and many living artists, including (to name only a few) Clem, Eckelberry, Gilbert, Lansdowne, O'Neill, Tudor, and (believe it or not) Roger Tory Peterson!

The author was a prominent British radiologist who gave up his career to found (in 1982) the Society for Wildlife Art of the Nations, which established the ICWA (also called by the shorter name “Nature in Art”) in 1988. In his introduction (called “Celebration”), the author states: “Other than NATURE IN ART, at present there does not appear, anywhere in the world, to be even one comprehensive public collection of fine, decorative and applied art depicting any living (or previously living) wild thing in any medium, from any part of the world and any period of history.” He makes the same point at least twice more in his “Celebration.” Although the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin, is mentioned on pp. 67 and 82, Trapnell apparently has no idea of the scope of the Woodson Museum’s collections, which are far superior to those of the ICWA, at least for twentieth century artists.

The author construes both “wildlife” and “painting” broadly. He includes wood engravings and block prints as well as etchings, but these occupy but a small part of the book. However, 11 artists are represented only by botanical works, a genre usually excluded from the definition of “wildlife painting.”

When books like this one are compiled by persons with little or no training in ornithology, misidentifications are virtually inevitable. I have found only two, probably because in almost all instances the *artist* identified the subject of the painting. On p. 89, the “Egyptian Goose” head appears to be that of a male Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*), the only waterfowl with the kind of knobbed bill in the drawing; the knob of the Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*), is much higher on the forehead and the bill is much longer than in the picture. On p. 122, the caption to an illustration of the “Blue Jay” by George Edwards reads “This blue jay, from the West Indies, is not meant to be the same as that from North America.” The species portrayed is actually the Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*), widely known in English-speaking Asia as “Blue Jay.”

Trapnell had no hesitation in pointing out what he felt to be faults in composition; in no

fewer than 7 plate captions, he tells us that the picture “would have been better if . . .” Only twice does he comment on ornithological errors, and these are both in erude 18th Century paintings whose faults are blatantly obvious: the Atkinson Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) on p. 10 and the Albin Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) on p. 120. His ornithological expertise was probably not sufficient for him to point out the too-long bill and too-small eye of the Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) on p. 61, the red iris of the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) on p. 71, or the many faults in color and proportion in Japanese Waxwings (*Bombycilla japonica*—identified only as “waxwings”) on p. 144. Lear’s painting of *Ara ararauna* on p. 135 is identified as “Blue and Yellow Maekaw;” the misspelling is Trapnell’s, as the spelling on Lear’s lithograph is “Maeeaw.” The author misplaces the hyphen in “Greater-spotted Woodpeckers” (*Dendrocopos major*) (p. 96), apparently not knowing that the species derives its name from being the largest of the European spotted woodpeckers, not from its having the largest spots!

So far this has been a rather negative review. What positive things can we say about this book other than such clichés as “the color reproduction appears to be excellent.” Its major contribution for American readers, I believe, is in introducing us to a number of European wildlife artists, both living and dead, many of whom should obviously be better known to us than they have been in the past. Among the living artists (excluding those specializing in botany), I confess to having been unfamiliar with the work of *Norbertine von Bresslern-Roth, *Jim Channell, *Don Cordery, *Michael Dumas, *Beth Erlund, *Anthony Gibbs, Vadim Gorbатов, *Robert Hainard, Rodger McPhail, Peter Partington, Colin Paynton, Lennart Sand, and *John Wilder; this may be owing, in part, to the fact that those artists whose names are starred (*) are represented by, and possibly specialize in, non-ornithological subjects.

Other than for collectors of *all* books on wildlife art, £35 (at this writing, about \$54 US) may seem a steep price to pay for a text by a highly opinionated author-editor and a chance to meet a few unfamiliar artists, although the author is donating all royalties to the Society for Wildlife Art of the Nations. In a spirit of brotherhood, perhaps some of the many North American artists unrepresented in the ICWA collection may wish to donate one of their works in order to improve the coverage of what is apparently the best collection of wildlife art in Europe. —KENNETH C. PARKES.

BIRDS IN KANSAS. Vol. II. By Max C. Thompson and Charles Ely. Univ. Kansas Mus. Natural History, Lawrence, Kansas. Public Educ. Ser., No 12 (J. T. Collins, ed.), distributed by The Univ. Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. 1992: xvi + 424 pp., 167 black-and-white photos, 206 distribution maps. \$25.00 (cloth), \$14.95 (paper).—The first volume of this work was published in 1989 and dealt with the non-passerines (see review, *Wilson Bull.* 1990. 102:361–362). The recent volume covers the 207 passerine species recorded in the state, including three on the hypothetical list (Black Phoebe [*Sayornis nigricans*], Fish Crow [*Corvus ossifragus*], and Western Bluebird [*Sialia mexicana*], two extirpated species (Common Raven [*C. corax*] and Black-capped Vireo [*Vireo atricapillus*]), and one that is none-of-the-above (Hooded Oriole [*Icterus cucullatus*]). The format in this volume follows that of the initial volume with paragraphs on Status, Period of Occurrence, Breeding (if appropriate), Habitats and Habitat, Field Marks, and Food. These sections are dictated by the Univ. of Kansas Museum series of which these volumes are a part, and are used for most but not all of the species, the treatment being the most variable for field marks and food. I sympathize with the authors in their less than enthusiastic inclusion of these two latter categories since these topics are better covered in other sources. Yet, if it must be done, it ought to be done well. Some provincial Bostonian, for example, might actually believe that